

# COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.  
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

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## Of Bricks and Mortar

### Part 1

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The morning light flits across the tongue-and-groove floor of the old room like a thief. Once the premiere guestroom on the second story of the Cosmopolitan Hotel, it is now empty, silen--beckoning with forgotten memories.

Loaded down with tools, including two chisels and a heavy brass hammer, I study the far wall, where one of the hotel's three fireplaces, built in 1869, once existed. My task is to locate the fireplace.

I tap the wall near a built-in closet. It's hollow. I continue tapping, moving away from the closet until I hear a heavy thump on the wall. With my big chisel and hammer, I begin cutting an incision across part of the wall and then two parallel cuts down it. I repeat the process several times, and then wedge a wide-edge spackle knife into the upper cut. Tapping gently, I begin to strip away chunks of plaster, cement, and lime.

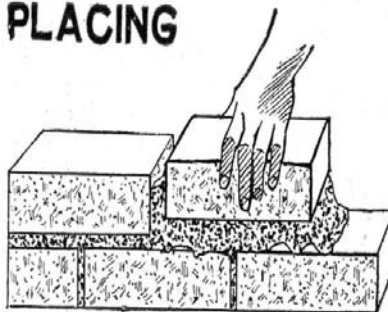
Over the next two hours my work gradually exposes the historic brick fireplace. The hearth is bricked up-- part of the 1930 remodel. The bricks on the wall face are sand-red in color, splattered with cement chips, and very soft to the touch. They are about 9 x 4½" in size, and set in alternating courses or layers of 1 stretcher (long side of the brick facing) and 2 headers (short side facing), which provided the brickwork with a natural bond or structural unity.



The art of bricklaying has not changed since 1869. Workmen then, like today, held the trowel palm-side up piled with mortar, and moved it along the center of the brick while turning the trowel to empty the mortar. They would throw or empty mortar in a column on one or more bricks at a time. With the trowel now held upside down, they then spread the mortar outward with the point of the trowel. Excess mortar was trimmed from the sides.

Each brick was placed on a level bed of mortar, and then gently pressed into the mortar with a downward slanting motion to push the mortar up into the vertical joint between the two bricks. Maintaining a uniform thickness of mortar in the joints is difficult but essential. The horizontal and vertical joints of the fireplace are consistently ½" thick or about ⅓ the thickness of the bricks.

### PLACING



### SHOVING

